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EVANGELICAL UNION;

ITS

ORIGIN,

AND

A STATEMENT OF ITS PRINCIPLES.



KILMARNOCK:

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EVANGELICAL UNION.

ON May, 16th, 17th, and 18th, 1843, the Brethren whose names are attached to the following statement of doctrine, met in the Conference-room adjoining the Chapel in Clerk's Lane, Kilmarnock, for prayer and consultation as to the best mode of co-operating in the work of the Lord. At these meetings, (which were held each day from 10 o'clock A.M. till 2 o'clock P.M.), Robert Morison, Minister of the Gospel, Bathgate, presided. At the first meeting (16th May) James Morison, Minister of the Gospel, Kilmarnock, read a paper containing a scheme for the proposed union, which was considered in detail, at that and the following meeting; and, after some emendation, was adopted in the form in which it is now presented to the Public, as the basis of an Association which was forthwith formed, under the designation of EVANGELICAL UNION. To prevent misconception it may be added, that neither in this nor in any other of these measures did the brethren legislate for the Churches. They acted on their own responsibility; and though they earnestly desire and request the co-operation of the several Churches with which they are connected, these Churches are not to be reckoned as part of the Union till they voluntarily join it; and it was left to the brethren present, (consisting chiefly of Ministers of the Gospel, elders, and delegates), to submit the proposal to the several Churches, at what time, and in what manner they may deem expedient. Moreover the brethren wish it to be understood, that connexion with this Union does not preclude connexion with similar Unions, where principle admits, and the cause of truth demands, and local or other circumstances may suggest such connexion.

At the last Meeting (May 18th) a variety of details were considered and arranged so as best to extend and

carry out the objects of the Union. Attention was especially directed to the subject of training up young men for the work of the ministry. To this the brethren felt that they were urgently called. Infant Churches were rising—applications were being made, more than could be met—and besides, in the several Churches there were a few young men of decided talent and piety who were eager to devote themselves to the work of the ministry. In these circumstances it was deemed advisable to take measures *without delay*; and after solemn deliberation it was unanimously agreed that a Theological Seminary be established in Kilmarnock, under the superintendence of brother James Morison; and that the brethren recommend to the several Churches of the Union that speedy efforts be made to obtain the requisite funds for supporting it, as well as for carrying out the other objects of the Union. Under a deep sense of the importance of this step, the brethren were more engaged in fixing its principles than in settling its details, which were left for future arrangement. It was unanimously agreed that every effort should be made to secure for the work of the ministry young men of decided piety and talent; that, in order to this, none be admitted into the Seminary except such as are recommended by the pastor and Church with which they are connected; and finally that it shall not be imperative on candidates for the ministry to go through a course of preparatory education at any of the Universities. It was further unanimously agreed that Brother Alexander Forsyth, who has been labouring as an Evangelist with great success, be forthwith recognised as a Preacher in connexion with the Evangelical Union.

On the subject of intercourse between the United ministers and Churches, the brethren unanimously agreed to recommend an interchange of Pastors when convenient, for a longer or shorter period annually; the details in every case to be arranged by the several pastors and Churches; and further, that there be in each Church a committee of correspondence, to maintain intercourse with the other churches in the Union,—an arrangement

which, when viewed in connexion with the duty of Churches to meet, *as such*, on the first day of the week, the brethren recommend as eminently fitted to sustain and animate the sister Churches, and draw more closely around them the bonds of Christian love. With the same view it was agreed that the Union shall meet annually at the several Churches in succession; and that, at the place of meeting, a series of revival services shall invariably be held.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Union, D.V., in Bathgate, on the Monday after the first Sabbath of June, 1844, to be opened by a Sermon on that evening from Brother A. C. Rutherford of Falkirk. As yet the Brethren do not feel called on to make any very definite arrangement as to who shall sit and act in the annual meetings. They agreed, that in the meantime, every Church be requested to send delegates to the next meeting, whether elders or members, it being understood that the Churches defray the expenses of those whom they send as delegates;—and it was further agreed that all ministers and elders have a seat, *ex officio*, in the annual meeting, whether delegated or not.

[The above statement is compiled out of the Minutes of the Union.

J. GUTHRIE, *Secretary*.]

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.

WE, the undersigned Christian Brethren, representatives of Christian Churches, and others, having met together at Kilmarnock, May 16th, 17th, and 18th, 1843, for the purpose of praying and conferring together about the best means of being useful in the service of our dear Redeemer, have agreed to form ourselves into an association under the designation of "EVANGELICAL UNION."

The objects of our union are mutual countenance, counsel, and co-operation in supporting and spreading the glorious, simple, soul-saving and heart-sanctifying "gospel of the grace of God."

The nature of our Union is strictly voluntary.

The members of our Union comprise all brethren who choose to be associated with us, who have "peace with God," and give decided evidence of being "new creatures in Christ Jesus," and who can concur with us in the following great principles, which great principles constitute the basis of our Union.

[N.B.—We wish it to be distinctly understood that the following statement of great principles is not to any degree, or in any sense, to be regarded as a permanent or present STANDARD BOOK in the churches with which we are connected; neither is it to be a test or term of communion in any of these churches. THE BIBLE is the only standard book which we recognise, and to no other standard book whatsoever can we subscribe.]

We hold that the Bible is the Book of God, and that, amongst other important truths, it reveals to us,

1st, God's character as our Sovereign Governor.

2nd, Our duty as the subjects of his government.

3rd, Our state and character as rebels against the authority of his government. And,

4th, The way of salvation by which we and all our fellow-rebels may be delivered from the penal and demoralising consequences of our rebellion.

I. God's character is made known to us in that definition of God—"God is love," 1 John iv 8, 16. Love

or benevolence then is the moral character of God; and as God is necessarily an infinite being—infinite in all his perfections, his character is accurately expressed in these words, “Infinite Benevolence.” Since this is the moral character of God, it follows that all God’s moral attributes are but particular manifestations of infinite benevolence. His grace or favour is his benevolence toward the undeserving. His mercy is his benevolence toward the hell-deserving. His anger is his benevolence wounded. His justice is his benevolence toward his whole empire, displaying itself in the securing of the interests of the great whole, at the expense of the interests of those parties who have made themselves pests in the universe. His wisdom, too, is just his infinite benevolence directing his infinite power, and directed by his infinite knowledge. His holiness, also, is summed up, like ours, in one word, LOVE; and, consequently, when it is said, “God is light,” 1 John i. 5, or “God is purity,” or “God is holiness,” there is but a different sound for the same sense that is brought out in the proposition, “God is love.”

II. Our duty as the subjects of God’s government is summed up in that word, “love,” Rom. xiii. 8—10; Gal. v. 14. It consists of that benevolence, which assimilates our character to the character of God, and which is enjoined upon us in the ten commandments, Exod. xx. 1—17, or more summarily still in those two commandments of the Saviour, on which “hang all the law and the prophets,”—supreme love to God, and love to every one of our neighbours, enemies and others, such as we bear to ourselves, Matt. xxii. 37—40. Obedience to this moral law constitutes our holiness, 1 John iii. 14, and if that obedience were perfect, it would be a complete fulfilment of our duty. To such complete holiness it is our anxious wish, and it shall be our constant endeavour, to attain; desiring, as we do, to seek supremely the promotion of God’s interests and glory, and, subordinately, the interests of the souls and of the bodies of all our fellow-men.

III.—As to our state and character as rebels against the

authority of God, we and all our fellow-men are totally guilty, and totally depraved. We are so guilty as to be hell-deserving, Eph. ii. 3. We are so depraved as to be hopelessly so, until brought under the influence of "the truth as it is in Jesus," Rom. iii. 9—20.

IV. As to the way of salvation by which we and all our fellow-rebels may be delivered from the penal and demoralising consequences of our rebellion, we learn from the Book of God that it originated in God's infinite benevolence. "God so loved the world," of course *the whole world*, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. God, then, because of his infinite benevolence toward the whole world; and no doubt also for the purpose of benefitting the whole universe, Eph. iii. 10, by displaying the exceeding evil of sin, the immovable stability of his government, and "the breadth and length and depth and height of his love," sent his Son Jesus into our world "in the likeness of sinful flesh" "to condemn sin"—all sin—"in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3, and to be "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world," without distinction and without exception, 1 John ii. 2. This propitiation being effected by "God manifested in our flesh," has shown God's infinite detestation of sin, as being in its nature ruinous to the well-being of the universe; his determination to put a stop to it, in order that the holy happiness and happy holiness of the universe may be secured; his infinite compassion for our race; and his infinite desire for our complete recovery from the effects of our transgressions. It has, moreover, so completely exhibited God's mind in reference to the desert of sin and the necessity of holiness, that it has more than counterbalanced the evil which our race, by its rebellion, must have inflicted on the great moral empire of God. This being the case, and the propitiation being made for every sin of every sinner in the world, 1 Tim. ii. 1—6; John i. 9, 29, God is now ready to pardon every sinner, who, by believing his record regarding this propitiation, is brought into

state in which his happy holiness and his holy happiness are secured, Acts xvi. 31; Rom. i. 16.

The simple belief of God's record regarding the propitiation, in the true sense of that record, immediately and in every case produces "peace with God," (*i.e.* peace in the prospect of meeting God,) which peace is invariably followed by "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 1, 2. This "peace with God" arises from the nature of the truth recorded by God and believed by the sinner, and is prior to any reflection upon the act of the mind in believing, or upon the morally transforming effects of the truth believed. The same truth, however, that thus immediately produces "peace with God" is of such a nature that it necessarily produces a revolution in the heart of the believer—a change from the love of sin to the love of holiness—a "new creation after the image of God," a transformation into that love to God and that love to man which is our duty, and constitutes our holiness, John xvii. 17; Gal. v. 6. It is because the truth believed necessarily has this effect, that God has at once made the belief of it essential to our pardon, (for pardon without *purity secured* would be no blessing), and has also made the simple belief of it the *only* thing on our part essential to the *immediate* enjoyment of pardon.

In order that all sinners may derive peace and purity from the knowledge of this propitiation, the Holy Spirit, a third divine subsistence in the Godhead, has in infinite love and condescension, given a record of it, and of other truths reflecting light upon it, in that Book called the Bible, and which we thus hold to be the Book of God. Through means of this book; and through means of institutions which He has appointed in it; and through means of the holy men who, by this book, have been led to throw their influence in the world into the scale of the religion of Jesus; and also, through means of innumerable diversified circumstances in creation and providence—all tending to lead the sinner to the knowledge of *God propitiated*—the Holy Spirit is using all the influence that our circumstances will admit of to bring all sinners to believe, and to bring all believers into closer contact with that

truth, or rather system of truths, that sanctifies as well as saves.* In using this influence He is no "respector of persons;" and, although circumstances permit much more to be done for one nation than for another, and for one man than for another, yet he equally desires the salvation and sanctification of all, 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9; Isa. v. 4; Acts vii. 51, and does for each all that in the circumstances he can. Were he doing less good than in the circumstances he could, he would not be infinitely benevolent; and to suppose this would be to contradict the great definition of God-head, "God is love."

It is manifest from all that has been said, that it is entirely in consequence of the Holy Spirit's influences that any sinners do believe, and that all believers do grow into conformity to the image of Jesus. Faith is "the gift of God," in every instance, Eph. ii. 8. It is "by grace"—pure, free, infinite grace—that "believers are what they are," 1 Cor. xv. 10. It is that grace that makes them to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7; and thus unto God alone we attribute the whole glory of every sinner's conversion, and every believer's sanctification.

As it is obvious, moreover, that whatever God does in time he from eternity purposed to do, it is manifest that the glorious results of the entire influence employed by the Spirit were present to the mind of God from all eternity.

HAVING thus specified our views of what the Book of God teaches regarding the character of God; the duty, natural state, and character of man; and the way of salvation: and having avowed our conviction of the unlimited

* The influence which the Holy Spirit employs, both with believers and unbelievers, we conceive to be entirely moral in its nature. It appears to us as incongruous that moral agents should be morally affected by physical, mechanical, or abstractly direct influence, as that mere material substances should be physically affected by moral power, *that is*, the power of motives. We hold that the Spirit draws only by truth, (John vi. 44, 45,) and that he is doing all that the circumstances will admit of to draw all men. (John xii. 32.)

extent of the propitiation, the universal aspect and moral nature of the influences of the Holy Spirit, the simplicity of that faith which, by means of its object, brings peace to the conscience and purity to the heart, and the free grace that pervades and envelopes the whole plan of mercy, we do not deem it necessary in this statement to descend into the minutiae of other doctrines, which are all subordinate to, and which hang in natural dependance upon, the great truths already exhibited. If the great truths be preserved unimpugned, we wish not to find fault with brethren who do not see eye to eye with us in every detail of depending doctrines, whether these doctrines have reference to the salvation of the sinner, or to the edification and usefulness of the believer.

We may state, however, that in reference to the edification and usefulness of the believer, we hold it to be his duty to associate with other believers in the same locality; for the purpose of securing to one another mutual counsel, exhortation, warning, and edification.* Heb. iii. 13.

Believers thus associated constitute a church. Gal. i. 2.

Every church thus constituted we conceive to be complete within itself—a separate church of Christ, over which no adjoining church or churches have any other liberty of control than that of Christian counsel and warning.

Every such church is bound to admit none to its fellowship but such as enjoy “peace with God,” and give evidence of being “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” 1 Cor. i. 2.; Acts ii. 47.

Every such church is bound to take the greatest care to preserve its purity, by faithfully administering discipline in the case of such brethren as act inconsistently with their profession. 1 Cor. v. 1—13.

Every such church should be careful to receive and treat as brothers and sisters in Jesus, all of every denomination who give evidence of being “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Rom. xiv. 1; xv. 7; Phil. iii. 16.

Every such church should meet on the first day of the

week—as a church—to edify itself by means of prayer, praise, and mutual exhortation. Heb. x. 24, 25; 1 Cor. xii., xiii., xiv.; Eph. iv. 16.

In every such church “the breaking of bread,” in commemoration of the propitiation of the Saviour, should be as frequently as possible observed. 1 Cor. xi. 20—34; Acts xx. 7; Acts ii. 46.

In every such church office-bearers should be chosen, elders to “rule well,” who shall also be “apt to teach;” and deacons, if needed, to attend to the interests of the poor. Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 1—13; 1 Tim. v. 17; Acts vi.

It is the duty and privilege of every such church, and of every member of it, to use every lawful means for the salvation of the world around “lying in the wicked one.” Mat. v. 13—16; Phil. ii. 15, 16. For this purpose, as well as for the purpose of securing accurate and faithful exposition of the original Scripture for the instruction and edification of the believers, it is highly important that every church, when able, should support one or more qualified and educated “men of God,” who may consecrate themselves entirely to the work of converting sinners and building up saints. 1 Tim. v. 17, 18; Gal. vi. 6; Rev. i. 20.

Being united together by the bond of the great leading doctrines of the Christian revelation regarding the character of God; the duty, natural state, and character of man; and the way of salvation; as already explained: and being also entirely of one mind as to the minor and subordinate principles, regarding the organization of churches, just referred to; we deem it important to constitute ourselves into a Union for the purpose of countenancing, counselling, and otherwise aiding one another; and also, for the purpose of training up spiritual and devoted young men to carry on and to carry forward the work and “pleasure of the Lord.” We hail as “true yoke-fellows” all of every name and denomination who wish that work and pleasure to prosper, and

who have "peace with God," and evidence their possession of this peace by the purity and spirituality of their lives. That they and we may enjoy for ever, and in all our ways, the counsel and the smile of our heavenly "Abba Father," is the heart's desire, and shall be the continual prayer of the following "UNIONISTS."

(Signed)

ROBERT MORISON, Presiding Pastor of the Church in Bathgate.

ALEX. C. RUTHERFORD, Presiding Pastor of the Church in Falkirk.

JOHN GUTHRIE, Presiding Pastor of the Church in Kendal.

JAMES MORISON, Presiding Pastor of the Church in Kilmarnock.

ALEX. FORSYTH, Evangelist.

WILLIAM WALKER, Delegate from Falkirk.

ROBERT HUNTER, Delegate from Bathgate.

ANDREW MUNGAL, Delegate from Bathgate.

HUGH PEDEN, Delegate from Galston.

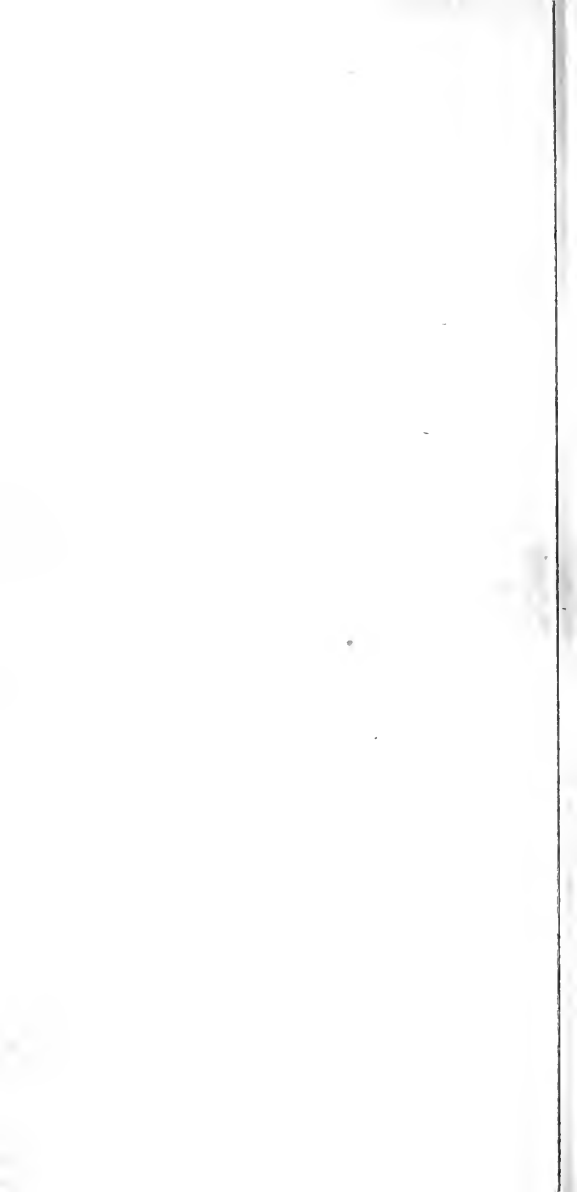
WILLIAM PATON, Delegate from Galston.

JAMES RICHMOND, Delegate from Darvel.

THOMAS ADAM, Elder, Kilmarnock.

JOHN PEDEN, Elder, Kilmarnock.

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